BUTLINS FOR THE BROWN RICE BRIGADE

GAVIN MARTIN AND PETER ANDERSON (PIX) AT GLASTONBURY

SHEPTON MALLET is buried in the heart of Somerset, one of the last remaining outposts of rural England. Two years ago a firm of London architects discovered a disused railway tunnel there and realised it could easily be bought from a desperate British Rail about to be crippled by public spending cuts. They wanted to construct a complex of nuclear fallout shelters in the tunnel, one of the first of its kind in Western Europe.

Clearly if the shelters were built local people would be uprooted and the quaint folkways and communities in the area destroyed. The place would be invaded by a crowd of batty crackpots with both the desire *and* the money to buy preservation in a ravaged and dehumanised hell-on-earth.

Despite their traditional conservatism the locals reacted to this proposal swiftly and indignantly. Shortly after the project was made public the Mid-Somerset branch of CND held a meeting in Shepton's village hall and a crowd four times greater than the building could hold turned up. A subsequent series of protests and demonstrations have so far prevented the Whitehall-blessed sadists from swinging into their auto-destructive stride.

Shepton's dilemma shows the full implications of a government determined on nuclear war. But it also symbolises how successful the rebirth of CND has been, encouraging a groundswell of grassroots opposition to Trident missiles and the like. The real value of the movement being that it pools people's personal fears and disaffections and constructively focuses their anger and opinions.

Michael Eavis is CND's publicist in Mid-somerset. He also owns the 150 acre Worthy Farm which for the past five years has been the site of the Glastonbury Fayre, which last week celebrated its tenth anniversary. While it may not be crucial in terms of specific action or strategy, it is notable that this year the three day festival, with an attendance of over 18,000, was held under the CND banner less than fives miles from the proposed location of the fallout shelters. For the first time Eavis promoted it himself, choosing all the bands; after paying off various creditors he raised £20,000 for a CND movement that conclusively showed itself to be a powerful national body.

So those are the facts surrounding the three days of entertainment which included theatre, mime, circus acts, films, crafts, workshops, playparks . . . and fornification, vomiting and dope-smoking.

PETER ANDERSON and I arrive at the festival late on Friday night in the middle of Roy Harper's agreeable but dated set of rustic wailing, electrified English whimsy and personal angst, all of which strikes a curiously apt tuning fork for what are to be three hot and weird days.

All around us campfires are in full blaze, a smell of burning wood hanging over the tents stretched over the sloping field as far as the eye could see. To our left a mad medic gibbers on about the vitality and nourishment that can be attained from his store of vitamin tablets. Nearby there is a figure down on all fours; as if drawing a pattern with the shadows of his flailing arms and swaying trunk he hovers above the ground moaning and growling in a language halfway between Russian and Gaelic. Then, with an almighty yell of triumph he collapses on to a white plastic container and rapidly consumes its bounty of a cloudy urine-coloured liquid.

A scrumpy victim! The floodtide of a gallon of the stuff has crashed on the shores of his senses and he's been powerless to resist.

We descend the hill along with an influx of straggling campers and head towards the stage which is housed in a massive silver pyramid at the bottom of the field. Harper's reckless harangue is getting louder and there's a tingling excitement and expectancy in the air.

Chickens roast on spits, a jolly fat lady in clean white overalls sells boiled sweets and real liquorice from a boldly painted caravan, there are tarot tents, campfire singers, organ grinders, colourfully decorated flags, and outside one tent a big sign says "Come in and join us we are your *friends*" . . .

I guess most people enjoyed Friday night the best. It was like being plunged into a magical and illicit otherworld peopled with friendly freaks. Everyone was free of festival fatigue and fresh with anticipation. The darkness added to the mystery and the laser show was an awesome spectacle coming from the peak of the pyramid and making a rainbow-like arc from one side of the field to the other. The extended carnival seemed to hold endless possibilities.

The problem was going to be keeping the spirit and wonder alive — and here the groups did much to disappoint and dampen the ardour.

A disgusting display of puerile pseudo-superstar tantrums from Roy Harper and Ginger Baker — still living under the illusion that everyone wants to hear old Cream standards (hacked to pieces at that) and 20 minute drum solos — got things off to a bad start. Baker and his cronies muscled their way onstage as the crowd yelled for Harper to encore and embarked on a set which was like having a bedsheet dipped in sour-sip bound tightly around the head. His visit to Africa certainly failed to influence his ultilisation of rhythms, and what he delivered was merely hard rock cliches dragged out and reheated for the umpteenth time.

A fact: his last song was called 'Wheelchair Dance Festival' and dedicated to the International Year of The Disabled.

ON SATURDAY morning Matumbi open, having been squeezed out of the previous day's schedule. They do very well providing one of the best sets in the whole event. Their music is free of the blandness that marred their last album, with 'Running And Hiding' and 'Point Of View' being the songs with the fittest and fattest sound.

Having prowled around and poked at the festival situation and their own music Matumbi succeeded in stirring the crowd out of the early '70s festival narcosis (which looms

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GLASTONBURY CONT

large, ghost-like throughout the whole festival). No mean feat at that time of the day when everybody is trying to cure their hangover by blowing as much dope as possible.

So everyone has woken up and things are looking lively. Oops, here comes Steve Ashley of CND garageland tape fame; good intentions, terribly creaky songs and whining protest. Everyone falls asleep again.

At the end of his set, the white boiler-suited compere who's prone to tediously embarrassing peace and love platitudes, announces that the theatre company want anyone interested in becoming a tree to go to the marquee at the left of the stage. Not surprisingly, a lot of people here are not regular concert goers; many are young couples who see it as an opportunity to take the kids for a holiday in the country. Which is all well and good, though I'd prefer something more private than what resembles a Butlin's For The Brown Rice Set.

Glastonbury could have been a much more powerful and determined expression of goodwill and conviviality if a group like The Specials, The Beat or even Defunkt had played and attracted a much more catholic audience.

A plump guy wearing a summer shirt motions in despair at the shrill Stevie high onstage.

"This is bloody terrible this is, the end of the bleeding world. If I see one more freak with a painted face, well do us a favour, you know what I mean?"

Somewhere near the end of their oddly erratic set, The Sound's Adrian Boland sang a song called 'Missiles', arranged with a gleam and depth at odds with their usual blundering with cumbersome dynamics. It's a challenging and confused song, creating an eerie, fleeting confrontation with the audience as it glides into an estranged reprise splattered with firepower and snatches of, (of all things) the Stones' 'Gimme Shelter'.

As Boland explained 'Missiles' has special significance. "That song's the reason why we wanted to play this festival. It seems stupid to me that this festival is for CND but few of the groups involved are dealing with the relevant issues.

"The sad thing about it is that the question of whether or not these missiles get built is completely out of these people's hands. But you can't just give up completely, you *must* keep trying."

Rab Noakes came on with his apologetic valium haze and the atmosphere threatened to anneal into a turgid rut with the market stalls revealed as little more than pedestals for 'alternative' hippy capitalist paraphernalia. The whole thing curiously begins to look like a counter-culture church fete.

John Cooper Clarke adds a much needed splash of deprecation and black humour to the affair. His speed-beat tragi-comedies are delivered at ten times their normal pace with only the methedrine'd metre of the verses to act as accompaniment. But the irony and insight which gives his performance a cutting edge, still fails to beat the audience's ability to laugh at those societies and communities that purportedly provide an 'alternative' to the ones he explores and exposes so well.

THE SMALL groups of punks at the festival have found a solution to the creeping ennui. The prototype Pig Youth white rastaman in bondage looks out of place amidst all these . . . older folk.

"Well all the punks seem to have made friends with each other because there's not very many of us. The best time is at night when you can get really drunk and stumble around from tent to tent. Like last night we had a really good time because we got some glue, a gallon of cider and some good Leb. We didn't really see anything, though I think I'll stay to see if Killing Joke turn up, watch New Order tonight and then go home tomorrow."

The rest of the afternoon is on the slide. Decline And Fall play hideous heavy metal, dredging the remnants of a junk-sick nightmare called The Only Ones. The Jazz Sluts are aptly named — and *that's* the kindest thing anyone could say about them. Aswad are their usual playful, dubful selves but their songs are still written for a Sunday School to which I do not subscribe.

God and Tony Wilson alone know the reason behind (out of) Order's visit to Glastonbury though the filming of a Factory 'fun' video undoubtably had something to do with it.

As ever Bernie Albrect seemed nervous and deeply gratified to the organisers for providing a backstage bar — going as far as to fall on his knees mid-set to prove it. New Order's sound is overburdened with the weight of the inevitable Curtis myth, past expectations and Factory's marketing strategy. Perhaps the doom leaden preoccupations of their music can be traced back to the tragic suicide, but it is no less edifying for all that.

A lot of the music's imagery is flattered by the romantic glow given to it by the star-filled sky and the pyramid's laser show. I spent the last part of their set watching a shooting star slowly cross the sky, finally floating off to . . . nowhere.

Perhaps it was a means of cosmic transportation bringing us to Hawkwind. The group are the indisputable darlings of the crowd and veterans of many a free festival. I'm at the front of the stage and not relishing it one bit.

Somebody drops a postcard at my feet from which I now quote: "Sorry you couldn't make it down. We all got to Stonehenge at 10 pm on Thursday, we went to see the stones and Mel got some photos. Hawkwind appeared on Friday night and the concert was good (they played 'Magnu'!) and we met the band and got them to sign our lab coats . . ."

The Hawkwind crowd is very passive. I'm very drunk and I keep shouting as many wicked insults as I can at the lumbering Hawkwind beasts. Logically the owners of the hair and denim round about should turn into slop-jawed thugs, fuelled on gut churning drink, howling bad breathed obscenities with malice burning in their hollow, colourless eyes. But no, all that happens is I get a few impatient glares and uncertain grins. Perhaps they thought I was mentally ill — and at that stage in the game they could have well been right.

Away off we go to find our beds, but at the top of the dusty lane which leads to the site entrance gate there's a van blocking the way. The driver explains that his wife is giving birth to a baby and they're waiting for the ambulance to arrive. I must confess, I need some sleep.

Just hangin' around

A LIMITED but clearly stated and well designed set of solid rock 'n' boogie from Supercharge and an uplifting speech by Edward P. Thompson are the only things that even *suggest* qualities such as energy and directness on the last day of the festival. Sunday begins with a light breeze and Hank Wangford showering the audience with aural road grit. The day will end with a mass of dehydrated bodies suffering radiation-like sunburn.

E.P. Thompson is one of the most intelligent, comprehensive and convincingly humanist spokesmen for the world peace movement. His speech, an informal discourse, set out the facts about nuclear armaments clearly and unflinchingly. He highlighted the ridiculous facade of 'detente', and pointed out that Russia is now faced with missiles on her border far more lethal than anything Kruschev tried to bring to Cuba in 1962. He impressed upon the audience the moves towards world peace recently seen in Germany, Holland and Poland, and he emphasised the necessity for an active worldwide propagandist reply to the 'theatre of war' played out each year by the Russians and Americans over the German border.

"We're not talking aobut multilateral disarmament — oh-yes-maybe-in-a-couple-of-years-if-the-time-is-right. If we're going to disarm we have to do it now, that's what they're saying in Holland and that's what we're saying in Britain."

In comparison Meg Beresford sounds embarrassing and nervy, delivering her speech in a voice halfway between a sob and that of a distraught school mistress. As well as contradicting Thompson, claiming youth can only affect a small degree of change, her speech seems to have have more fear than hope. It is also littered with unfortunate ambiguities.

"We must take courage from Holland," she exhorts.

"Aye — Dutch courage!" roars back a small crowd.

". . . there's a spirit rising across Europe," proffers Beresford.

"Whisky," retorts a scotchman.

And then, best of all, "If you're going into a darkened room it's better to go in holding hands with a friend."

Well Meg, I'm sure you're well intentioned, but let's leave it for the WI coffee mornings and not 18,000 campers roasting in the afternoon heat of midsummer's day.

And it *is* sweltering now, hot for a party — but the only new record the DJ seems to have among his Beatles and god-knows-how-many-scrambled-'60s-guitar bands is 'Double Fantasy', and as he plays it I realise Sunday is going to turn into a nauseous nightmare. I float, sleep and struggle through a drugless hallucination.

I remember falling asleep as Cheech and Chong's incessant babbling drifted over the field, waking up to hear the girl beside blaming a boy on a recently contracted dose of STD. I go to the wholefood store and the nudists are out in force, with three skinny and unimpressive samples baring all.

"Eee-oh-aye, migod, look at those lads with their dingery doo dahs hanging out," exclaims an elderly village fruit-seller.

"Eat more fruit for Godsake mate," shouts a much blunter and drunker individual.

I buy 'a beanburger', the pacifist's lethal reply to nuclear power. Already the British Medical Association are recommending each one should come with a free oxygen tent.

The kiddies' playpark is great with all the seven year old Ants fans laying siege to the castle and occasionally straying outside to terrorise the audience. In the centre of the park there are three huge trampolines packed with screaming painted children, while two people continuously roll an inflatable log back and forth over their heads. It looks like the most there is today and I'd love to have had a go but I'm too old and shy; besides, that whole scene looks *dangerous*. If I climbed aboard one of those things I might never come back.

Look at Gong, f'rinstance. Their 'Radio Gnome' took a trip into a bizarre theatre of anarchism and post-acid gunk in the mid '70s now they've disappeared down that tunnel for good, forsaken and forgotten. They'd be like Jethro Tull — had Ian Anderson wanted to be a cosmonaut rather than a country squire.

There's a large mud patch, the only one on the festival, around the water tank dispensaries. A lone foolish creature lays down and rolls in it with all the relish of a sow on heat. Adulation is often hard to comprehend, in this case it's well-nigh incomprehensible. Slouched in a hunchback position, hair dripping with muck, the mud encrusted around his eyes and caked to his legs, the pitiful wretch goes to the front of the stage for the rest of Gong's transmission.

I wake up for the last time with third degree sunburn, a splitting headache and the blur of the muckman in a zombiefied away in front of me. I'm struck by a terrible thought: imagine having to share an unventilated bus ride home with this lot; unwashed, eating beanburgers and all in a dippy Gong-like nirvana.

It's all too much. Taj Mahal may be heading the bill but Judy Tzuke and Gordon Giltrap stand in the way. I see a steady trickle of folks struggling through the heat, the dust and the litter as they make their way to the exit gate far up on the top of the hill. And I know I must go to that place.